

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Sanford Bishop

May 31st, 2012

"Mr. Chairman. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

"Mr. Chairman as you know, the allocation provides \$71.7 billion for the FY 2013 Milcon/VA bill which is equal to the FY 2012 enacted. In my opinion the allocation is what we could have expected if the Republicans would have stuck to the bipartisan agreement that established \$1.047 trillion as the Committee's allocation.

"I have stated at every step of this process that I strongly disagree with the path Majority has chosen to take and I just want to point out that the \$1.028 trillion allocation puts House Republicans at odds with House Democrats, Senate Democrats, Senate Republicans and the White House. In fact, the Statement of Administration Policy recommends a veto of this bill because the overall 302(a) allocation fails to stick to the framework established by the Budget Control Act.

"I believe the lower allocation does nothing but slow down the appropriations process and if it stands, will stall economic growth and impede job creation.

"With that being said, I am pleased to join Chairman Culberson as the House takes up the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bill for Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related Agencies.

"The Milcon/VA bill is critically important to the strength and well-being of our military, our veterans and the families who sacrifice so much to defend our country. In fact Mr. Chairman I find it quite fitting that we are debating this bill after observing Memorial Day earlier in the week.

"Working with Chairman Culberson and the members of the subcommittee, we have crafted a bill that will address the funding needs for military construction and family housing for our troops and their families as well as other quality of life construction projects. In addition, it will provide funding for many important VA programs as well as agencies like the Veterans Court of Appeals and the American Battle Monuments Commission.

"The bill before us today touches every soldier, sailor, Marine and airman. In addition this bill also will impact military spouses, their children, and every Veteran that participates in VA programs.

"I want to commend the Chairman for his work. Together we sat through numerous hearings, gaining valuable insight to the workings of all agencies under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. I also would like to thank all of our subcommittee members and recognize them for their hard work on this bill. I believe that the minority was treated fairly during this process and I want to thank the Chairman for ensuring this bipartisan result.

"Chairman Culberson has already provided the funding highlights in the bill and I will not repeat them all, but I would like to point out a few items that I believe are very important.

"The bill before us today includes \$546 million for the renovation and replacement of 10 DoD schools. Mr. Chairman, I believe that providing the funds for DOD schools will help our servicemembers' children get a quality education in a safe facility, and will give our servicemembers some peace of mind.

"I was pleased to see that the bill includes \$127 million for the second increment for the Medical Center Replacement in Germany. As you know, a large proportion of serious casualties from the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters are treated there, and I am pleased to see that we are making this important investment.

"For Veteran Affairs, I am pleased that the bill meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, medical care, information technology and facilities. The bill contains \$54.4 billion in advance appropriations for medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities at the VA, which is \$1.9 billion above the amount included in the FY 2012 bill. Mr. Chairman, I strongly believe that advance funding provides tim

ely and predictable funding for the veterans' health care system

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"Overall, the bill provides adequate funding for programs included in this bill; however, I am especially troubled by one item. Unfortunately, during Full Committee markup an amendment was adopted that essentially nullifies the decision-making ability of the Department of Defense to use a Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) business model. The sponsor of this language believes it doesn't limit the Department from using PLAs. Unfortunately, that is not the case. I had the minority subcommittee staff check with the Department regarding this language. The Department confirmed that if this bill is enacted with the current PLA Language included, it would prohibit the Department from soliciting bids for FY13-funded construction contracts where, as a condition of award, the awardee must negotiate a project labor agreement. In addition, we do not know the effect this language could have on other agencies included in this bill. Using the Milcon/VA bill to address this issue is the wrong place.

"This language is purely an ideological and political provision that goes well beyond the scope of this bill. The Milcon/VA bill has always enjoyed broad bipartisan support and avoided divisive issues like this no matter which party held the gavel. I believe that including this language will only cause unnecessary complications and does nothing to help our servicemembers or our Veterans. Mr. Chairman, please know that as we continue through the process I will work to address this issue because an item like this has no place in a bill that has always placed our troops, their families and our Veterans above ideology.

"Before I close Mr. Chairman, I would like to recognize the staff for all of the hard work and time they have put into this bill. From the Minority Committee Staff I would like to thank Matt Washington and Danny Cromer as well as Michael Reed and Chris Chon from my personal office. From the Majority Committee staff I would like to thank Donna Shabazz, Sue Quantius, Sarah Young and Tracey Russell.

"I would also like to thank Mr. Dicks and Mr. Rodgers, who serve as the distinguished Ranking Member and Chairman of this Committee. I reserve the balance of my time."